

But that was then. The image of the flag that soldiers see today is different. Instead of flags aflame, we see flags covering coffins of soldiers and Marines returning the hard way from Iraq and Afghanistan. Pushing forward a constitutional amendment is labor-intensive work. I'm concerned how such a diversion during wartime might appear to those who are still serving in harm's way.

Please don't get me wrong. I have many friends in Congress, patriots all. Each one of them has been to Iraq and Afghanistan many times. Although he refuses to advertise the fact, one was wounded there during an inspection tour last year. My concern relates not to the sincerity of Congress but to the perceptions among our young men and women that their overseers are suddenly distracted at a time when attention to their needs has never been more necessary.

Our soldiers want to be assured that Congress is doing all it can to reduce losses in what Lincoln ruefully termed the "terrible arithmetic" of war. They want to know that Congress is doing all it can to give them the weapons they need to maintain the fighting advantage over the enemy. They are concerned that their equipment is wearing out under constant use. They and their families are worried that not enough soldiers are in the pipeline to replace them.

We know from letters and conversations that our young soldiers returning from combat are concerned about the future of their institutions. They want to know who is focused on reshaping our Army and Marine Corps so that both services will be better able to fight the long fight against radical Islam. How will Congress fund the future? Where will the new weapons and equipment come from? They are also worried about more personal issues like housing and health care for themselves and their families.

Dan Brown was my First Sergeant in Vietnam. I was new to war. He had served in two. He gave me a piece of advice then that Congressmen intent on changing the subject should heed: "In combat the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. Otherwise, you die." The main thing today for Congress and the Nation should be the war in Iraq. Soldiers are sworn to defend the right to free speech with their lives even if "speech" is expressed in despicable ways. What they want in return is the assurance that our lawmakers will hold their interests dear.

So the message from most of us soldiers is clear: Debate a flag-burning amendment if you wish. But don't create the perception among our young men and women in combat that there are more important issues than their welfare at the moment. Wait a while. At least for their sake, wait until the last flag-draped coffin comes home.

RECOGNIZING BRIAN LESEMAN FOR ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 27, 2006

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Brian Leseman, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 495, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Brian has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the

many years Brian has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Brian Leseman for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

RESIGNATION OF THE HONORABLE NORMAN Y. MINETA, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 27, 2006

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, Norman Mineta last week announced his resignation from the President's Cabin as Secretary of Transportation—the longest serving Transportation Secretary in the history of the Department. His departure comes gracefully and on his own terms, just as were his more than three decades in public service to the American people.

Norm's public service can't be condensed into a press release or simple statement of appreciation. His years of service to the country he loves—on behalf of his California constituents and in the arena of transportation—are unparalleled for their impact and effectiveness. The past 30-plus years have proven Norm a giant in his field and a true friend to those of us that served with and learned from him.

On occasion Norm joined me in the mountains of southern West Virginia, each time increasing his understanding of our unique landscape and transportation needs. In his years as a Member of Congress and as Transportation Secretary he did a great deal to improve the infrastructure of southern West Virginia and, indeed, the lives of southern West Virginians.

I am certain Norm will continue his outstanding record of service as a private citizen in the years to come and I congratulate my friend on his decision and wish him, his wife Deni and his two children, David and Stuart, the very best.

TRIBUTE TO NUCOR STEEL- JACKSON INC.

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 27, 2006

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, the United States of America has always stood for economic opportunity and freedom. And in recent generations our nation has strived to provide an even better model for equality of opportunity. The work has been long and arduous, and it has not been without its setbacks.

We have struggled in the schools, the halls of government, in the workplace to make equality of opportunity something that is written on our hearts as well as in our laws.

Some of the most successful undertakings in the struggle for equality have been in our mills, and foundries and factories. Mississippi's manufacturing sector has provided genera-

tions of our citizens the opportunity to enter the middle class and realize The American Dream.

Manufacturing jobs have traditionally provided above average wages and the medical and other benefits that strengthen families and society. These jobs have also provided Mississippi workers with the satisfaction that comes from seeing their work transform raw goods and materials into finished products of usefulness and value.

Since 1998 the United States has lost more than 3.3 million manufacturing jobs. Here in Mississippi the manufacturing job loss approaches 60,000, and this has undercut the strength and resilience of our state's economy. The erosion of our state's manufacturing sector presents a significant barrier to our state's long-term economic progress.

Mississippians are especially mindful of the need for economic strength and resilience as we rebuild from the devastation of last year's hurricane. The world has witnessed the stunning economic setbacks wrought by Hurricane Katrina, but they have also witnessed the strength of our spirit and our resolve to rebuild Mississippi better and stronger than before.

If we are to accomplish this we must create a sound economic foundation for manufacturing. This means we face several additional important tasks as we continue to rebuild. We must ensure that international trade agreements—either in their drafting or their enforcement—do not discriminate against Mississippi manufacturers because they adhere to the world's highest environmental, health and safety standards. We must redouble our efforts to root out and halt all unfair trading practices among our trading partners because these practices place Mississippi manufacturers at a significant and unfair disadvantage.

One American manufacturer is leading a national grass-roots effort to bring back the level playing field to global trade and the global economic arena in which our manufacturers compete. Nucor Corporation is underwriting and leading an unprecedented series of grass roots town hall meetings across the country to inform voters and inspire action among elected officials at every level of government.

These meetings have been held in states across America and have drawn as many as 4,000 citizens. Nucor Steel—Jackson, Inc., which employs 250 workers in Mississippi, is hosting the eleventh Nucor Town Hall Meeting on June 29, 2006 in Jackson, Mississippi. It is noteworthy that in a political age where we often focus on personalities and scandal that this meeting will feature in-depth presentations and discussions of substantive issues.

Voters and elected officials are provided an important forum to look at the underlying causes of our massive job losses and to propose policies and actions that can reverse the trend and put American manufacturing back on track.

Rebuilding Mississippi in the wake of the hurricanes has proved a daunting challenge, but we have demonstrated the spirit and resolve to get the job done. We also face the long-term challenge to restore manufacturing to its rightful status as a cornerstone of our economy. We offer our appreciation to Nucor Steel—Jackson for their leadership as we face this challenge and make our commitment to Mississippi's future.